U.S. Latina Authors Series
The World of Sandra Cisneros
(born 1954)

08/05/2006

"Art is in all of us."
Sandra Cisneros (1984)

About the Author

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 20, 1954, the third child in a family of seven children. The only daughter among seven children, she recalled that her brothers attempted to control her and expected her to assume a traditional female role. Thus, Cisneros explains that she grew up feeling as if she had "seven fathers." The family's frequent moves, many of them between the United States and Mexico to visit her paternal grandmother, left Cisneros feeling alone and displaced. She found refuge in reading widely and in writing poems and stories.

The only daughter of a Mexican father and a Mexican-American mother, she was educated in the U.S. Midwest before moving to the Southwestern borderlands in 1984. She has worked as a teacher to high-school dropouts, a poet-in-the-schools, a university recruiter, an arts administrator, and most recently as a visiting writer at a number of universities around the country.

Internationally acclaimed for her poetry and fiction, Cisneros has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Lannan Literary Award and the American Book Award, and of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the MacArthur Foundation. She is the author of numerous books, including a children's book, *Hairs: Pelitos*. Her books have been translated into ten languages. Cisneros lives in a periwinkle purple house in San Antonio, Texas.

Selected Works by Sandra Cisneros

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—. *Hairs: Pelitos.* Trans. Liliana Valenzuela. New York: Dragonfly Books, 1994.

Anthology

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—. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1992.

Novels

—. *Caramelo, or Puro Cuento*. New York: Knopf, 2002.

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Recordings by Sandra Cisneros

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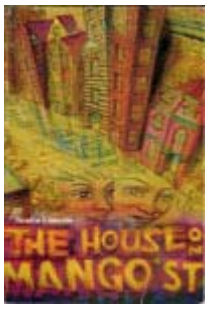

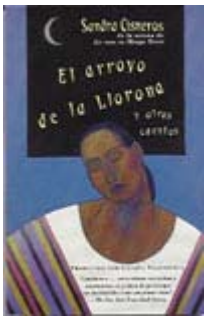

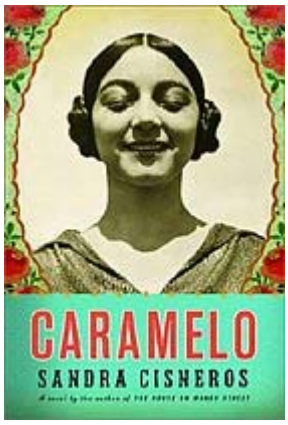

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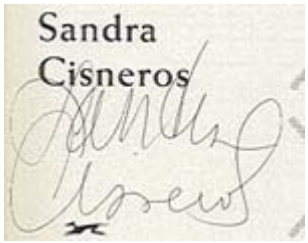
"You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are."
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)



The Woman Hollering Creek sign on U.S. Interstate 10 between San Antonio and Seguín, Texas.

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U.S. Latina Authors Series
The World of Sandra Cisneros
Excerpt from *Caramelo* (2002)

Acuérdate de Acapulco,
de aquellas noches,
María bonita, María del alma;
acuérdate que en la playa,
con tus manitas las estrellitas
las enjuagabas.

"*María bonita*," by Augustín Lara,
version sung by the composer while playing the piano,
accompanied by a sweet, but very, very sweet violin

We're all little in the photograph above Father's bed. We were little in Acapulco. We will always be little. For him we are just as we were then.

Here are the Acapulco waters lapping just behind us, and here we are sitting on the lip of land and water. The little kids, Lolo and Memo, making devil horns behind each other's heads; the Awful Grandmother holding them even though she never held them in real life. Mother seated as far from her as politely possible; Toto slouched beside her. The big boys, Rafa, Ito, and Tikis, stand under the roof of Father's skinny arms. Aunty Light-Skin hugging Antonieta Araceli to her belly. Aunty shutting her eyes when the shutter clicks, as if she chooses not to remember the future, the house on Destiny Street sold, the move north to Monterrey.

Here is Father squinting that same squint I always make when I'm photographed. He isn't *acabado* yet. He isn't finished, worn from working, from worrying, from smoking too many packs of cigarettes. There isn't anything on his face but his face, and a tidy, thin mustache, like Pedro Infante, like Clark Gable. Father's skin pulpy and soft, pale as the belly side of a shark.

The Awful Grandmother has the same light skin as Father, but in elephant folds, stuffed into a bathing suit the color of an old umbrella with an amber handle.

I'm not here. They've forgotten about me when the photographer walking along the beach proposes a portrait, *un recuerdo*, a remembrance literally. No one notices I'm off by myself building sand houses. They won't realize I'm missing until the photographer delivers the portrait to Catita's house, and I look at it for the first time and ask,

—When was this taken? Where?

Then everyone realizes the portrait is incomplete. It's as if I didn't exist. It's as if I'm the photographer walking along the beach with the tripod camera on my shoulder asking,

—*¿Un recuerdo?* A souvenir? A memory?

U.S. Latina Authors Series
The World of Sandra Cisneros
Reader's Guide for *Caramelo* (2002)

Source: http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=0679435549&view=rg

Sandra Cisneros, the award-winning author of the highly acclaimed *The House on Mango Street* and several other esteemed works, has produced a stunning new novel, *Caramelo*. This long-anticipated novel is an all-embracing epic of family history, Mexican history, the Mexican-American immigrant experience, and a young Mexican-American woman's road to adulthood. We hope the following questions, discussion topics, and author biography enhance your group's reading of this captivating and masterful literary work.

Born the seventh child and only daughter to Zoila and Inocencio Reyes, Celaya Reyes spent her childhood traveling back and forth between her family's home in Chicago to her father's birth home in Mexico City, Mexico. Celaya's intimidating paternal grandmother, adored and revered by Celaya's father, dominates these visits, and Celaya dubs her the Awful Grandmother. Celaya's story begins one summer in Mexico when she was just a little girl, but soon her girlhood experiences segue back in time—to before Celaya was born—to her grandparents' history. Celaya traces the Awful Grandmother's lonely and unhappy childhood in a Mexico ravaged by the Mexican revolution of 1911, her meeting and ultimate union with Celaya's grandfather, Narciso Reyes (the Little Grandfather), and the birth of their first and favorite son, Celaya's father, Inocencio. Inocencio Reyes moves to the United States as a young man, and soon meets Zoila, a Mexican-American woman, with her own colorful mixed-Mexican parentage. Celaya develops the portrait of her parents' love-based, but volatile, marriage and the growth of their own Mexican-American family. After the Little Grandfather's death, the family moves the Awful Grandmother up to the United States with them, first to Chicago, then to San Antonio. Soon afterward, the Awful Grandmother dies, leaving her teenage granddaughter to struggle with her unresolved relationship with her late grandmother. Through her grandmother's history, Celaya discovers her own Mexican-American heritage, enabling her ultimately to carve out an identity of her own in the two countries she inhabits and that inhabit her—Mexico and the United States.

As the family's self-appointed historian, or storyteller, Celaya's tale weaves Mexican social, political, and military history around intimate family secrets and the stormy and often mysterious relationships among multiple generations of family members. The marvelous, often riotous cast of characters that march through time and across the North American continent ranges from close family members to Mexican-American icons of popular culture that have random encounters with the Reyes family. (Remember Señor Wences with his painted talking hand (p. 224)? The spirited, likeable characters, while at times mythological in their characteristics, are always intensely human in their flaws and emotions. While each character can claim equal footing in the Reyes web of family and history, each holds a role of differing significance in Celaya's personal odyssey of connecting to her roots and carving her future.

For Discussion

1. From the novel's opening epigraph—"Tell me a story, even it it's a lie."—to its end, the relationship between truth, lies, history, and storytelling is an important theme. Posits Celaya, "Did I dream it or did someone tell me the story? I can't remember where the truth ends and the talk begins." (p. 17) And while she is assuring us, "I wish I could tell you about this episode in my family's history, but nobody talks about it, and I refuse to invent what I don't know" (p. 136), she also acknowledges, "The same story becomes a different story depending on who is telling it" (p. 159). For example, clearly the Awful Grandmother is sugarcoating the truth about her marriage to Narciso (p. 174). What other aspects of the novel are evidently "untruthful"? Is the reader to believe that *Caramelo* is just a "different kind of lie" (p. 250)?

2. Celaya says, "I'm not ashamed of my past. It's the story of my life I'm sorry about." (p. 410). What's the difference?

3. The narrative transitions from one storyteller's point of view, or voice, to another's in different parts of the story. For example, in Chapter 22, Celaya as the storyteller engages in a dialogue with the Awful Grandmother about the way the grandmother's story is being told (pp. 99-126). Then, in Chapter 29,

Narciso begins to tell his own story of when he lived in Chicago (p. 139). And later, in Chapters 34-45, the dialogue between Celaya and the Awful Grandmother returns. Celaya seems to find her own voice and point of view in Chapter 58. What does the author achieve by shifting the viewpoint from character to character? How does the tone change to reflect the voices of a poor Mexican orphan, a young officer in the Mexican army, an American teenage girl, and others? How does this narrative device affect the reader's ability to sympathize or empathize with the characters?

4. Often elements of one person's life are echoed later in the story, in either the same character's life or in another character's. For example, Cisneros uses the same sentence ("And it was good and joyous and blessed") to describe Grandmother's first encounter with Narciso (p. 157) and later her death (p. 355). And the argument between Mother and Celaya (p. 371) echoes the earlier argument between Aunty Light-Skin and the Awful Grandmother (p. 268). Where are there other examples of this repetition within the novel? What themes does this structural repetition help convey?

5. The family history that forms the central story line of *Caramelo* is structured in part chronologically and in part by the relationships formed by different family members. As our narrator informs us: "Because a life contains a multitude of stories and not a single strand explains precisely the who of who one is, we have to examine the complicated loops that allowed Regina to become la Señora Reyes" (p. 119). Does this nonlinear plot structure support the assertion that family and history are without beginning, middle, or end, but are, rather, a "pattern" (p. 411)?

6. How does the historical chronology at the end of the novel edify the Reyes family events that take place within the body of the narrative—and vice versa? In other words, since the reader probably read the story before the chronology, how do the fictional family events illuminate the factual chronology of United States and Mexican history? Is *Caramelo* like or different from other historical fictions, such as Alex Haley's *Roots*, with which the reader might be familiar?

7. "We are all born with our destiny. But sometimes we have to help our destiny a little" (p. 109) is a theme emphasized throughout the novel. For example, Viva tells Celaya: "I believe in destiny as much as you do, but sometimes you've gotta help your destiny along" (p. 353). What exactly is the nature or power of the "destiny" that the characters seem to revere? Who or what is really in control of the lives and histories portrayed? How is destiny different for Celaya, her grandmother, her parents, and her friend Viva? Celaya says of Ernesto: "He was my destiny, but not my destination" (p. 411). What is the difference?

8. How does the oft-repeated phrase "[j]ust enough, but not too much" (e.g., p. 98) describe the kind of person the Awful Grandmother is? What aspects, if any, of the Awful Grandmother's life story parallel Celaya's life story? Are the Awful Grandmother and Celaya alike in character, and if so, in what ways? How does Celaya, who upon her grandmother's death "can't think of anything to say for my grandmother who is simply my father's mother and nothing to me" (p. 357), ultimately come to feel that she's "turned into her. And [can] see inside her heart" (p. 439)? What does the Awful Grandmother teach Celaya about herself?

9. Celaya writes, "On Sunday mornings other families go to church. We go to Maxwell Street" (p. 301). Does she relate this cynically or humorously, or both? What religious beliefs does Celaya hold? How is her faith or religion different from Zoila's, who is portrayed as having no faith at all (Chapter 61), or from the faith or religion of the Awful Grandmother (see, for example, p. 196)?

10. What is the role played in the novel by the various Mexican or Mexican-American figures of popular culture who have encounters with members of the Reyes family? How does Cisneros use these characters to convey both the individuality as well as the universality of the Mexican-American immigrant experience?

11. The characters in *Caramelo* make frequent observations about Mexicans. For example, the Little Grandfather claims that being Mexican means loving as intensely as hating (p. 56; and p. 282), Zoila asserts that "all people from Mexico City are liars" (p. 360), and Celaya comments that Mexicans "leave much unsaid" (p. 442). With what tone do the characters deliver these types of generalizations, and how are they to be interpreted? Why might these characters portray their native countrymen in this way? Do people of other cultures make similarly deprecating comments, and what purpose might making such comments serve for such people?

12. How does the Reyes family view the United States as compared to Mexico? How are the two countries portrayed in *Caramelo* on both political and social levels? Celaya observes that "[e]veryone in Chicago lived with an idea of being superior to someone else, and they did not, if they could help it, live on the same block without of lot of readjustments, of exceptions made for the people they know by name instead of as 'those so-and so's' " (p. 297). Is this different or similar to how people from different classes or ethnicities (such as the Indians) in Mexico City treat or view each other?

13. The Reyes family members move fluidly throughout the book between Mexico and the United States. Does the ease of such movement diminish for each generation? How does the immigration of Inocencio and his siblings and first cousins reflect immigration between the countries in the middle part of the twentieth century, and how has immigration to the United States from Mexico changed today? How do the changes in immigration reflect the changes in the relationship between the countries? How does *Caramelo* reflect the immigrant experience generally for the middle part of the twentieth century, and how have changes within the United States both socially and politically affected the contemporary immigrant experience?

14. For the Reyes family members who immigrate to the United States, which elements of Mexico are preserved in America and which are lost in the process of assimilation? Is it necessary for an immigrant to lose something of his or her original culture in order to assimilate into a new culture and, once assimilated, are the old ways lost for good? Does being "American" mean something different for the first generation of immigrants such as Inocencio than for the American-born Zoila or their daughter, the American-born Celaya? How does Celaya reconcile her Mexican legacy with her American future, and does this reconciliation give meaning to the term "Mexican-American"? How do shifting external border relations between Mexico and the United States reflect or affect the characters' internal conflicts between their Mexican and American identities?

15. Aunty Light-Skin proclaims: "Because that's how los gringos are, they don't have any morals. They all have dinner with each other's exes like it was nothing. That's because we're civilized, a *turista* once explained to me. What a barbarity! Civilized? You call that civilized? Like dogs. Worse than dogs. If I caught my ex with his 'other' I'd stab them both with a kitchen fork. I would!" (p. 280). What system of morality do the Reyes abide by? Does this code of morality reflect a more Mexican, more American, or a Mexican-American way of thinking? What cultural differences between Mexicans and Americans does Aunty Light-Skin's proclamation illustrate?

16. "There is nothing Mexican men revere more than their mamas; they are the most devoted of sons perhaps because their mamas are the most devoted of mamas—when it comes to their boys" (p. 130). What explains the strength of the relationship between Inocencio and the Awful Grandmother? Is the relationship between Zoila and Toto equally strong? Why or why not? How can mothers and daughters, such as Aunty Light-Skin and the Awful Grandmother, or Celaya and Zoila, successfully relate to each other in the face of such strong mother-son relationships? Is the favoritism these mothers show for their sons unique to Mexican culture? How does the bond between a son and his mother compare to the relationship between Celaya and Inocencio?

17. How does the fact of Candelaria's parentage affect each of the family members differently—Zoila, the grandmother, Celaya? Does the information that Candelaria's father is Inocencio change relationships between or among any of the Reyes family members?

18. Celaya says, "Life was cruel. And hilarious all at once" (p. 27). And when things seem to have reached a low point in her life, she proclaims, "Celaya. I'm still myself. Still Celaya. Still alive. Sentenced to my life for however long God feels like laughing" (p. 365). What attitude does Celaya have toward her own life? What keeps her going?

19. Inocencio tells Celaya: "Always remember, Lala, the family comes first—*la familia*." Does her needy call home to Papa after her episode with Ernesto in Mexico City prove her father right (p. 401)? How does Celaya reconcile her father's statement about family with her own vision of her future as an independent woman?

20. The first time the word “*caramelo*” appears in the book is when it is used to describe Candelaria's skin tone (p. 31). The second time is to name the color of the Awful Grandmother's uncompleted *rebozo* (p. 96). How are the two events connected? Why might Cisneros have chosen *Caramelo* for the title? What does the *caramelo rebozo* mean to Celaya the storyteller? To Celaya the Reyes family member? (See p. 442).

21. Cisneros employs elaborate and vivid food metaphors, such as "Regina was like the papaya slices she sold with lemon and a dash of chile; you could not help but want to take a little taste" (p. 121) and "Have you ever been that sad? Like a donut dunked in coffee" (p. 281). Is taste the strongest sense her metaphors invoke? How does she also invoke the senses of smell, sight, and sound? What does Cisneros achieve stylistically or thematically by invoking these senses?

22. In Chapter 66 ("Nobody but Us Chickens") the Grandmother gets sick—then, before Celaya reports to the reader her grandmother's fate, she relates in Chapter 67 (“The Vogue”) how she and Viva got caught shoplifting. Why might Cisneros have juxtaposed these two chapters? Celaya also sets up family mysteries and delays solving them until much later in the novel. For example, the mystery of why Celaya is missing from the photograph on the beach (p. 2) is answered later (p. 78 and p. 326). Are there other examples of such mysteries, and how does Cisneros use these mysteries to structure the plot and move it along?

23. Does Celaya betray her father by telling the story? Is Inocencio right that the family portrayed in *Caramelo* appears "shameless," as he cautions Celaya (p. 444)? If not, how might one describe the family portrayed in Caramelo?

24. How does *Caramelo* push the stylistic boundaries of a traditional novel? Does the author's use of footnotes; different voices; repetition; Spanish language, songs, and poetry; as well as other stylistic devices alter the definitions of form and structure? How do such stylistic devices reinforce the themes of the novel?

U.S. Latina Authors Series
The World of Sandra Cisneros
"Salvador Late or Early" (1991)
Young Writers Responding to Literature

Cisneros, Sandra. "Salvador Late or Early." *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories.* New York: Vintage 1991. 10-11.

1. Literary Elements

Explain the metaphor in the following excerpt from the short story "Salvador Late or Early."

"*Salvador with eyes the color of caterpillar, Salvador of the crooked hair and crooked teeth, Salvador whose name the teacher cannot remember*[.]"

2. Literary Elements

What literary element does the following excerpt contain?

"*Arturito has dropped the cigar box of crayons, has let go the hundred little fingers of red, green, yellow, blue, and nub of black sticks that tumble and spill over and beyond the asphalt puddles until the crossing-guard lady holds back the blur of traffic for Salvador to collect them again.*"

A. Personification

B. Simile

C. Irony

D. Metaphor

3. The Essay: Writing About Literature

What does the last sentence of the short story suggest about Salvador's significance in the larger world?

"*Grows small and smaller to the eye, dissolves into the bright horizon, flutters in the air before disappearing like a memory of kites.*"

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The World of Sandra Cisneros
Author Photographs

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what can you say about these photographs? What do you recognize? Are you interested in becoming a photographer? (Photo credits. First Row: Rubén Guzmán; Dana Tynan; Rubén Guzmán. Second Row: Rick Hunter; Frederich Cantor; John Dyer. Third Row: Courtesy photo; Sharon Steinman.)

U.S. Latina Authors Series
The World of Sandra Cisneros
Biography

Source: http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/chh/bio/cisneros_s.htm

"It was not until this moment when I separated myself,

when I considered myself truly distinct, that my writing acquired a voice."

In her poetry and stories, Mexican American author Sandra Cisneros writes about Mexican and Mexican-American women who find strength to rise above the poor conditions of their lives. These types of characters have not been presented so clearly in U.S. literature. Cisneros is determined to introduce them to American readers, and so far her efforts have been successful. A reviewer for the *Washington Post Book World* described Cisneros as "a writer of power and eloquence and great lyrical beauty."

Cisneros' ability to write about these strong characters comes from her childhood experiences. Born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1954, she grew up in poverty. As the only girl in a family of seven children, Cisneros spent a lot of time by herself. Because her family moved often, she was not able to form lasting friendships. "The moving back and forth, the new school, were very upsetting to me as a child," she explained to Jim Sagel in *Publishers Weekly.* "They caused me to be very introverted and shy. I do not remember making friends easily." Instead, Cisneros became a quiet, careful observer of the people and events around her, and recorded her feelings through secret writings at home.

Shyness Masks Her Talent

Because she was too shy to volunteer or speak up in class, Cisneros often received poor grades while attending Catholic schools in Chicago. Her Mexican American mother and her Mexican father, however, both knew the importance of education. Her mother made sure all the children in the family had library cards, and her father made sure they all studied so they wouldn't have to work as hard for a living as he did. "My father's hands are thick and yellow," Cisneros wrote in *Glamour* magazine, "stubbed by a history of hammer and nails and twine and coils and springs. 'Use this' my father said, tapping his head,'not this' showing us those hands."

Although Cisneros learned to study hard, she was still too shy to share her creative writings at school. She felt many of her early teachers were not interested in her experiences. Finally, in the tenth grade, Cisneros was encouraged by one of her teachers to read her works to the class. She was also encouraged to work on the school's literary magazine and eventually became its editor.

Dreams of Being a Writer

After high school, Cisneros attended Loyola University in Chicago to study English. Her father thought she might find a good husband if she went to college. What Cisneros discovered instead was the desire to be a writer. After graduating from college, encouraged by another teacher who recognized her writing talent, Cisneros enrolled in the poetry section of the Iowa Writer's Workshop, a highly respected graduate school for aspiring writers.

Cisneros's old fears about sharing her writings with others soon came back. Many of Cisneros's classmates had come from more privileged backgrounds than she had, and she felt she could not compete with them. As she explained in an interview in *Authors and Artists for Young Adults,* "It didn't take me long to learn—after a few days of being there—that nobody cared to hear what I had to say and no one listened to me even when I did speak. I became very frightened and terrified that first year."

Realizes the Importance of Her Heritage

She soon realized, however, that her experiences as a Mexican American and as a woman were very different, but just as important as anything her classmates wrote about. "It was not until this moment when I separated myself, when I considered myself truly distinct, that my writing acquired a voice," she explained to Sagel. Out of this insight came her first book, *The House on Mango Street.*

Published in 1984, the book is composed of a series of connected short passages or stories told by Esperanza Cordero, a Mexican American girl growing up in a Chicago barrio. Much like Cisneros when she was young, Esperanza wants to leave her poor neighborhood to seek a better life for herself. As Esperanza tells her stories, readers come to understand how people live their lives in her neighborhood. Although Esperanza gains enough strength by the end of the book to leave her house on Mango Street, she is reminded by one of the other characters that she must never forget who she is and where she came from: "You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are."

The House on Mango Street

The House on Mango Street was a successful book. Many schools, from junior high schools through colleges, have used it in their classes. The book's success, however, didn't provide an easy life for Cisneros. After graduating from Iowa with a masters degree in creative writing, she worked as a part-time teacher. In 1986, she moved to Texas after receiving a fellowship (a financial award) to help her finish writing *My Wicked, Wicked Ways,* a book of poetry. After this volume was published in 1987, Cisneros's money ran out, and she could not find a job. She wanted to stay in Texas and even tried to start a private writing program. She passed out fliers in supermarkets to get interested people to join, but the program failed. Sad and broke, Cisneros had to leave Texas to take a teaching job at California State University in Chico, California.

Signs Major Publishing Contract

While in California, Cisneros received another grant of money to help her write a book of fiction. This new award from the National Endowment for the Arts revitalized Cisneros and inspired her to write *Women Hollering Creek and Other Stories.* Random House offered to publish the book in 1991, making Cisneros the first Chicana (Mexican American woman) to receive a major publishing contract for a work about Chicanas. The book, a series of short stories about strong Mexican American women living along the Texas-Mexico border, received praise from critics across the nation.

In 1994, another large publishing company issued *Loose Woman,* Cisneros's second collection of poetry. The main theme behind many of the poems in the book was love and its many powerful forms. A reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* wrote that the book again presents "a powerful, fiercely independent woman of Mexican heritage, though this time the innocence has long been lost." And at the beginning of 1995, Random House issued a Spanish-language translation of *The House on Mango Street, La casa en Mango Street.* Cisneros also published a children's picture book in 1994, *Hairs/Pelitos,* which presents diversity, individuality, and family bonds to readers ages 4-8.

The writer was in the news in Texas for two years over the color of her house. Cisneros lives in a historic district of San Antonio, so when she painted her house a very brilliant purple in 1997, the city board objected. For two years the dispute went on, until the paint faded to a shade of lavender, which the city deemed "historically appropriate."

Cisneros feels it is important for people of all races and ethnic groups in the United States to understand the lives of Mexican Americans, especially Mexican-American women. And Cisneros feels it is her duty to write about them. As she stated in *Authors and Artists for Young Adults,* "I feel very honored to give them a form in my writings and to be able to have this material to write about is a blessing."

U.S. Latina Authors Series
The World of Sandra Cisneros
(born 1954)

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago in 1954, the third child and only daughter in a family of seven children. She studied at Loyola University of Chicago (B.A. English 1976) and the University of Iowa (M.F.A. creative writing 1978). Her books include a chapbook of poetry, *Bad Boys* (Mango Press, 1980); two full-length poetry books, *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* (Third Woman 1987; Random House, 1992) and *Loose Woman* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); a collection of stories, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (Random House, 1991); a children's book, *Hairs/Pelitos* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); and two novels, *The House on Mango Street* (Vintage, 1991) and *Caramelo* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

Caramelo was selected as notable book of the year by several newspapers including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle,* the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Seattle Times*. It also was nominated for the Orange Prize in England. *Caramelo* was selected by Louise Erdrich as the NBC *Today* show Book of the Month. Her novels have been selected for One City/One Book projects in numerous communities including Los Angeles, Miami, Fort Worth, El Paso, and Milwaukee. *House on Mango Street* has sold over two million copies and is read in classrooms across the country, including elementary, middle, high school, and university levels.

Woman Hollering Creek was awarded the PEN Center West Award for Best Fiction of 1991, the Quality Paperback Book Club New Voices Award, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, and the Lannan Foundation Literary Award. It was also selected as noteworthy book of the year by *The New York Times* and the *American Library Journal*, and nominated Best Book of Fiction for 1991 by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Loose Woman won the Mountains & Plains Booksellers Association's 1995 Regional Book Award in the poetry category.

Cisneros' other awards include the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, 1995; a Texas Medal of the Arts Award, 2003; an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Loyola University, Chicago, 2002; an honorary Doctor of Letters from the State University of New York at Purchase, 1993; two National Endowment of the Arts Fellowships for fiction and poetry, 1982, 1988; the Roberta Holloway Lectureship at the University of California, Berkeley, 1988; the Chicano Short Story Award from the University of Arizona, 1986; the Before Columbus American Book Award, 1985; the Texas Institute of Letters Dobie-Paisano Fellowship, 1984; and an Illinois Artists Grant, 1984.

Her books have been translated into over a dozen languages, including Chinese, Danish, Dutch, French, Galician, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish, and, most recently, Greek, Serbo-Croatian, Swedish, Thai, and Turkish.

Cisneros notes that, "In the past I worked as teacher and counselor to high-school dropouts, as an artist-in-the-schools where I taught creative writing at every level except first grade and preschool, a college recruiter, an arts administrator, and as a visiting writer at a number of universities including the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I currently earn my living by my pen. I live in San Antonio, Texas, in a violet house filled with many creatures, little and large."

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